

ART. XXVI.—Dietetical and Medical Hydrology. *A Treatise on Baths; including Cold, Sea, Warm, Hot, Vapour, Gas, and Mud Baths: also, on the Watery Regimen, Hydropathy, and Pulmonary Inhalation; with a description of Bathing in Ancient and Modern times.* By JOHN BELL, M.D., etc. etc. Philadelphia, Barrington & Haswell, 1850: 12mo. pp. 658.

WHEN we consider the importance of bathing in its hygienic as well as therapeutic relations—as a means for the promotion and maintenance of health, and for the cure of disease—we cannot but deem it somewhat strange that there should exist so few treatises in the English language on the subject—no one, in fact, until the appearance of that of Dr. Bell in 1831, of which the present may be considered as an extended and improved edition, that presents a comprehensive view of the effects upon the human body of the several varieties of baths, “their resemblances and contrasts, and their successive and alternate uses.”

As simple a matter as bathing may appear, and as harmless a fluid as the water—cold, warm or tepid—of which the bath is composed—there are few things in the use of which more frequent errors are committed—leading often to a serious impairment of health, if not to the production of actual disease. Even in the application of baths to the cure of disease, there is reason to fear that the profession generally are not fully informed of the whole extent of their therapeutic powers, the particular pathological conditions to which the several baths are applicable, or the stage and circumstances of the disease to which they are individually adapted.

On every point connected with the hygienic and therapeutical employment of bathing, the treatise of Dr. Bell will be found to contain ample instruction, based upon correct views of physiology and pathology, and of the effects produced by the application of water, at different temperatures, to the body under the varying circumstances of health and disease: the correctness of the principles established upon scientific data being proved by a reference to the recorded experience of cotemporaneous physicians, as well as of those of former periods.

Dr. Bell addresses himself to the unprofessional as well as to the professional reader. In its hygienic application, bathing is alike important to every one, and hence it is essential that the public generally should be informed as to the manner in which they may be enabled to derive from it all the advantages it is calculated, in this respect, to afford. Even in their use as a remedial agent, there exist so many popular errors and prejudices in relation to baths that often stand in the way of their full and effectual employment by the physician, that to attempt the removal of these by showing to the general reader, the experience of the profession as to their propriety and curative powers, may not be without good results.

Dr. Bell, however, warns his readers, that the portions of his treatise devoted “to the therapeutical application of baths, or their employment in the cure of diseases” are intended “to be exclusively appropriated by his medical brethren.”

“High,” he remarks, “as his estimate is of the varied uses of water for the wants of the animal economy, he does not believe that even this simple fluid can be employed with safety and advantage as a *remedy*, except by persons properly qualified to practice medicine. If any advantage could arise to those who are not of the profession, from a perusal of the medical portions of the volume, it would be, to learn that the practice recommended by their medical adviser, to which they might object on account of its supposed novelty and doubtful character—such as, for example, the use of the cold bath in scarlet fever—is supported by large and safe precedent.”

We believe that all who attentively study the treatise of Dr. Bell, will confess that, while they have been interested by its subjects, and the manner in which these are treated by the author, they have also derived no little instruction on “the operation and effects of the different kinds of baths on the animal economy, as well in its healthy as in its diseased state.” It would be a very

[July

equivoocal recommendation to denominate the work the best systematic treatise on bathing in the English language, for, as we have already remarked, it is the only one of that description accessible to the great mass of American physicians, to whose patronage we strongly commend it.

D. F. C.

ART. XXVII.—*The History, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Edematous Laryngitis.*
By ELISHA BARTLETT, M. D., Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine in the University of Louisville. Louisville, 1850: 8vo. pp. 34.

THIS is a well drawn up and highly instructive memoir on the pathology, diagnosis, and treatment of a disease of more frequent occurrence than is perhaps generally supposed—one which always runs its course with great rapidity, and terminates very generally in death, unless arrested by prompt and active treatment.

The author was induced to prepare the present treatise, he informs us, in consequence of there being no full and complete history of Edematous Laryngitis generally accessible to American physicians; the meagre accounts of the disease contained in the standard works on the practice of medicine, both English and American, being inadequate to furnish that knowledge in relation to it which is calculated to lead to an accurate diagnosis and a successful treatment.

Dr. Bartlett has derived the materials for the preparation of his memoir from the most reliable sources, and has employed them in a manner so judicious that he cannot fail to receive the thanks of those for whose instruction the memoir is designed. He claims no originality in regard to any of the views advanced, either pathological or therapeutic, nor has he added any observations of his own, confirmatory or corrective, of those of the authorities he adduces; nevertheless, in the humble task he has undertaken, of compiling, from the valuable materials furnished by others, a practical treatise that may reach thousands who have no access to the information in relation to the formidable disease of which it treats, contained in the writings of the continental physicians, he may be the means of diffusing information that shall cause the saving of many valuable lives.

D. F. C.

ART. XXVIII.—*The Life and Correspondence of ANDREW COMBE, M.D., &c. &c.*
By GEORGE COMBE. Res non verba queso. Philadelphia. A. Hart, late Carey & Hart, 1850: 12mo. pp. 428.

FEW authors, whose writings are chiefly confined to subjects relating to physiology and special hygiene, have become so extensively known to persons not of the medical profession as the subject of the present memoir. Among the thousands whom he has interested and instructed by his works, few will be found, now that his active mind and ready pen have been arrested by death, without the desire to learn something of "the home life, the daily labours, and the character of one who has devoted himself to the improvement of his fellow-men, and, if happily it may be, also, as an exemplar, in his own person, of the truth of the precepts which he inculcates."

This natural and rational desire will be fully gratified by the life and correspondence of Dr. Combe, written and arranged by his brother. The Biography is in itself full of instruction; in the words of the American editor—"it exhibits a man whose childhood was passed in a state neither favourable to health, nor to the best culture of the affections, and whose manhood was ushered in by alarming disease, which, although often remitting in its violence, was ever his companion until the day of his death. Yet, notwithstanding these adverse circumstances, his mind was gradually developed into a state of maturity and even vigor, which enabled him, under the impelling power of a resolute will and high conscientiousness, to be a teacher and a guide to his